

Dr. Patricia Turner - PC Handout

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No Kill 101



**A Primer on No Kill Animal Control
Sheltering for Public Officials**

NO KILL 101:

A Primer on No Kill Animal Control Sheltering for Public Officials

A Revolution Begins

In the last decade and a half, several shelters in numerous communities have comprehensively implemented a bold series of programs and services to reduce birthrates, increase placements, and keep animals with their responsible caretakers. As a result, they are achieving unprecedented results, saving upwards of 95 percent of all impounded animals in open admission animal control facilities. Some of these communities are urban, others rural, some are politically liberal, and others are very conservative. Some are in municipalities with high per capita incomes, and others are in those known for high rates of poverty. These communities share very little demographically. What they do share is leadership at their shelters who have comprehensively implemented a key series of programs and services, collectively referred to as the “No Kill Equation.”

The fundamental lesson from the experiences of these communities is that the choices made by shelter managers are the most significant variables in whether animals live or die. Several communities are more than doubling adoptions and cutting killing by as much as 75 percent—and it isn't taking them five years or more to do it. They are doing it virtually over-night. In Reno, Nevada, local shelters initiated an incredible lifesaving initiative that saw adoptions

increase as much as 80 percent and deaths decline by 51 percent in one year, despite taking in a combined 16,000 dogs and cats.

In addition to the speed with which it was attained, what also makes Reno's success so impressive is that the community takes in over two times the number of animals per capita than the U.S. national average and as much as five times the rate of neighboring communities and major U.S. cities. In 2010, 91 percent of dogs and cats were saved, despite an economic and foreclosure crisis that has gripped the region. They are proving that communities can quickly save the vast majority of animals once they commit to do so, even in the face of public irresponsibility or economic crisis. This is consistent with the results in Charlottesville (VA), Tompkins County (NY), and others.

Unfortunately, many shelter directors remain steadfast in their refusal to embrace the No Kill paradigm. Among the various excuses for why it cannot be done, the three most common are that there are simply too many animals for the available homes (“pet overpopulation”), that shelters are not given adequate

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funding by local governments to get the job done without killing, and that the No Kill philosophy is inconsistent with their public safety obligations.

Rethinking Conventional Wisdom

In the United States, however, review of the data, as well as the experiences of the most innovative, progressive, and best performing shelters nationwide, prove that our movement needs to re-evaluate both the notion as to “who is to blame” as well as “what shelters can do about it.” To put it bluntly, shelters have the ability to save animals who are not irremediably suffering, hopelessly ill, or truly vicious dogs (which, combined, apprise less than ten percent of all impounds), and they can do so very quickly. And the two most often cited reasons—pet overpopulation and lack of resources—have not shown to be true barriers to success.

No Kill Is Cost Effective

To begin with, many of the programs identified as key components of saving lives are more cost-effective than impounding, warehousing, and then killing animals. Some rely on private philanthropy, as in the use of rescue groups, which shifts costs of care from public taxpayers to private individuals and groups. Others, such as the use of volunteers, augment paid human resources. Still others, such as adoptions, bring in revenue. And, finally, some, such as neutering rather than killing feral cats, are simply less expensive, with exponential savings in terms of reducing births.

In addition, a 2009 multi-state study found no correlation between per capita

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funding for animal control and save rates. One community saved 90 percent of the animals, while another saved only 40 percent despite four times the per capita rate of spending on animal control. One community has seen killing rates increase over 30 percent despite one of the best-funded shelter systems in the nation. Another has caused death rates to drop by 50 percent despite cutting spending. In other words, there was no correlation between success/failure and per capita spending on animal control. The difference between those shelters that succeeded and those that failed was not the size of the budget, but the programmatic effort of its leadership.

In other words, the amount of per capita spending did not seem to make a difference. What did make a difference was leadership: the commitment of shelter managers to implement a key series of necessary programs.

The Data Disproves Overpopulation

The second reason often cited for failure to embrace and/or achieve No Kill is the idea of pet overpopulation, but the data here has also not borne out the claim. It is important to note that the argument that there are enough homes for shelter animals does not also include any claims that some people aren't irresponsible with animals. It doesn't mean it wouldn't be better if there were fewer of them being impounded. Nor does it mean that shelters don't have institutional obstacles to success. But it does mean that these problems are not insurmountable. And it

does mean shelters can do something other than killing for the vast majority of animals.

In the United States, current estimates from a wide range of groups indicate that approximately four million dogs and cats are killed in shelters every year. Of these, given data on the incidence of aggression in dogs (based on dog bite extrapolation) and save rates at the best performing shelters in the country from diverse regions and demographics, better than 90 percent of all shelter animals are "savable." The remainder consists of hopelessly ill or injured animals and vicious dogs whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave. That would put the number of savable dogs and cats at roughly 3.6 million.

These same demographics also tell us that every year, roughly 23 million Americans are considering bringing a new dog or cat into their home, and 17 million of those households have not decided where they will get that animal and can be influenced to adopt from a shelter. Even if the vast majority of those 17 million (upwards of 80 percent) got a dog or cat from somewhere other than a shelter, U.S.

shelters could still zero out the deaths of savable animals. On top of that, not all animals entering shelters need adoption: Some will be lost strays who will be reclaimed by their family (shelters which are comprehensive in their lost pet reclaim efforts, for example, have demonstrated that as many as two-thirds of stray dogs can be reunited with their families). Others are unsocialized feral

cats who need neuter and release. Some will be vicious dogs or are irremediably suffering and will be killed. In the end, a shelter only needs to find new homes for roughly half of all incoming animals.

From the perspective of achievability, therefore, the prognosis for widespread No Kill success is very good. But let's put all this aside. Let's assume "pet overpopulation" is real and insurmountable. To do that, we have to ignore the data. We also have to ignore the experiences of successful communities. In the United States, to accept the "No Kill is impossible" argument requires pretending the knowledge and the results do not exist.

How does this change our support for the No Kill philosophy and the programs and services that make it possible? Even if "pet overpopulation" were true, it doesn't

change the calculus. In the United States, shelters nationally are killing roughly half or more of all incoming animals. To borrow an overused sports analogy: that puts the save rate at the 50-yard line. And although the evidence is overwhelming to the contrary, let's say that shelters can never cross the 90% save-rate goal

line because of "pet overpopulation." What is wrong with moving the ball forward? If all shelters put in place the programs and services that brought rates of shelter killing to all-time lows in communities throughout the United States, they can save millions of additional lives nationally, regardless of whether they ever achieve an entirely No Kill community. That is worth doing and worth

The data shows that every year there are six times more people looking to acquire an animal than there are animals being killed in shelters.

doing without delay. Because every year they delay, indeed every day they delay, the body count increases.

No Kill Is Consistent with Public Safety

And finally, a No Kill community is one where no savable animals are killed. Unfortunately, there are some animals who are hopelessly ill or injured, irremediably suffering, or in the case of dogs, vicious with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation. These animals are not adoption candidates and sadly, at this time in history, they are often killed, unless hospice care and sanctuaries are available. But since the No Kill philosophy does not mandate that vicious dogs or irremediably sick animals be made available for adoption, it is wholly consistent with public health and safety.

In fact, today, No Kill is a humane, sustainable, cost-effective model that works hand in hand with public health and safety, while fulfilling a fiscal responsibility to taxpayers. The success of this approach across the country proves the viability of the No Kill model and the above principles.

The No Kill Equation

Two decades ago, the concept of a No Kill community was little more than a dream. Today, it is a reality in many cities and counties nationwide and the numbers continue to grow. And the first step is a decision, a commitment to reject kill-oriented ways of doing business. No Kill starts as an act of will.

Following a commitment to No Kill is the need for accountability. Accountability requires clear definitions, a lifesaving plan, and protocols and procedures oriented toward preserving life. But accountability

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also allows, indeed requires, flexibility. Too many shelters lose sight of this principle, staying rigid with shelter protocols, believing these are engraved in stone. They are not. Protocols are important because they ensure accountability from staff. But inflexible protocols can have the opposite effect: stifling innovation, causing lives to be needlessly lost, and allowing shelter employees who fail to save lives to hide behind a paper trail.

The decision to end an animal's life is extremely serious, and should always be treated as such. No matter how many animals a shelter kills, each and every animal is an individual, and each deserves individual consideration.

And finally, to meet the challenge that No Kill entails, shelter leadership needs to get the community excited, to energize people for the task at hand. By working with people, implementing lifesaving programs, and treating each life as precious, a shelter can transform a community.

The Mandatory programs and services include:

TNR Program

Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) programs for free-living cats allow shelters to reduce death rates.

High-Volume, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter

No- and low-cost, high-volume spay/neuter reduces the number of animals entering the shelter system, allowing more resources to be allocated toward saving lives.

Rescue Groups

An adoption or transfer to a rescue group frees up scarce cage and kennel space, reduces expenses for feeding, cleaning, and killing, and improves a community's rate of lifesaving. Because millions of dogs and cats are killed in shelters annually, rare is the circumstance in which a rescue group should be denied an animal.

Foster Care

Volunteer foster care is a low-cost, and often no-cost way of increasing a shelter's capacity, caring for sick and injured or behaviorally challenged animals, and thus saving more lives.

Comprehensive Adoption Programs

Adoptions are vital to an agency's lifesaving mission. The quantity and quality of shelter adoptions is in shelter management's hands, making lifesaving a direct function of shelter policies and practice. If shelters better promoted their animals and had adoption programs responsive to community needs, including public access hours for working people, offsite adoptions, adoption incentives, and effective marketing, they could increase the number of homes available and replace killing with adoptions. Contrary to conventional wisdom, shelters can adopt their way out of killing.

Pet Retention

While some surrenders of animals to shelters are unavoidable, others can be prevented—but only if shelters work with

people to help them solve their problems. Saving animals requires shelters to develop innovative strategies for keeping people and their companion animals together. And the more a community sees its shelters as a place to turn for advice and assistance, the easier this job will be.

Medical & Behavior Programs

To meet its commitment to a lifesaving guarantee for all savable animals, shelters need to keep animals happy and healthy and keep animals moving efficiently through the system. To do this, shelters must put in place comprehensive vaccination, handling, cleaning, socialization, and care policies before animals get sick and rehabilitative efforts for those who come in sick, injured, unweaned, or traumatized.

Public Relations/Community Development

Increasing adoptions, maximizing donations, recruiting volunteers and partnering with community agencies comes down to increasing the shelter's public exposure. And that means consistent marketing and public relations. Public relations and marketing are the foundation of a shelter's activities and success.

Volunteers

Volunteers are a dedicated "army of compassion" and the backbone of a successful No Kill effort. There is never enough staff, never enough dollars to hire more staff, and always more needs than paid human resources. That is where volunteers make the difference between success and failure and, for the animals, life and death.

Proactive Redemptions

One of the most overlooked areas for

reducing killing in animal control shelters are lost animal reclaims. Shifting from a passive to a more proactive approach has allowed shelters to return a large percentage of lost animals to their families.

A Compassionate Director

The final element of the No Kill Equation is the most important of all, without which all other elements are thwarted—a hard working, compassionate animal control or shelter director not content to continue killing, while regurgitating tired clichés about “public irresponsibility” or hiding behind the myth of “too many animals, not enough homes.”

No Kill is simply not achievable without rigorous implementation of these programs. They provide the only model that ever created No Kill communities. It is up to us in the humane movement to demand them of our local shelters, and no longer to settle for the excuses that shelters often put up in order to avoid implementing them.

Comprehensive Implementation

To succeed fully, however, shelters should not implement the programs piecemeal or in a limited manner. If they are sincere in their desire to stop the killing, animal shelters will implement and expand programs to the point that they replace killing entirely. Combining rigorous, comprehensive implementation of the No Kill Equation with best practices and accountability of staff in cleaning, handling, and care of animals, must be the standard.

In 2004, for example, one SPCA in a city of 1.5 million people conducted fewer than 200 free spay/neuter surgeries for the pets

of the community's low-income population. Shelter leaders can boast of a low-cost and free spay/neuter program, but 200 surgeries in a large city, with one in four people below the federal poverty line, will not impact the numbers of animals entering city shelters. By contrast, another city with roughly half the population performed approximately 9,000 surgeries a year throughout the late 1990s, roughly 84 percent of them were free.

Similarly, animal control in yet another community allowed only employees to participate in its foster care program. The shelter can say it is implementing the programs of the No Kill Equation, but it is excluding thousands of animal lovers from participating in the effort, seriously limiting its lifesaving potential.

A shelter committed to No Kill does not send neonatal orphaned kittens into foster care “sometimes,” but rather every time. A shelter committed to No Kill does not merely allow rescue groups access to animals “some of the time,” but every time a legitimate rescue group is willing to take over care and custody of the animal. Indeed, a No Kill shelter actively seeks these groups out and contacts a particular rescue organization whenever an animal meets its criteria.

In short, shelters must take killing off the table for savable animals, and utilize the No Kill Equation not sometimes, not merely when it is convenient or politically expedient to do so, but for every single animal, every single time. A half-hearted effort isn't enough. It is primarily the shift from a reactive to proactive orientation and from a casual, ad-hoc, limited implementation to a comprehensive one, which will lead to the greatest declines in killing, and fix our broken animal shelter system.



If every animal shelter in the United States embraced the No Kill philosophy and the programs and services that make it possible, we would save nearly four million animals who are scheduled to die in shelters this year, and the year after that. It is not an impossible dream.

ALSO AVAILABLE:

DOLLARS & SENSE

The Economic Benefits of No Kill Animal Control

THE COMPANION ANIMAL PROTECTION ACT:

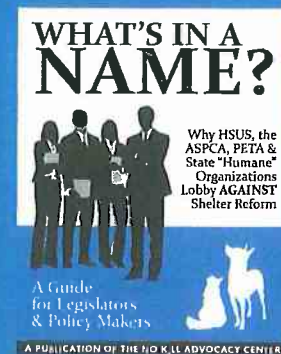
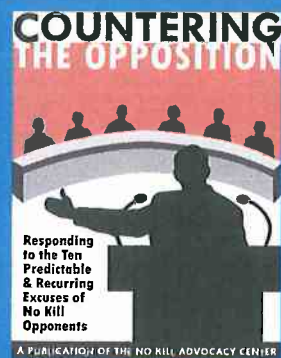
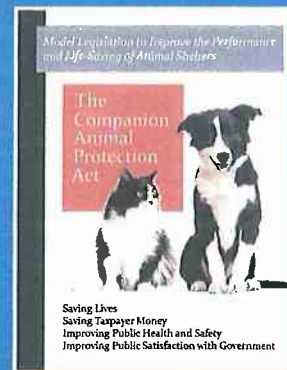
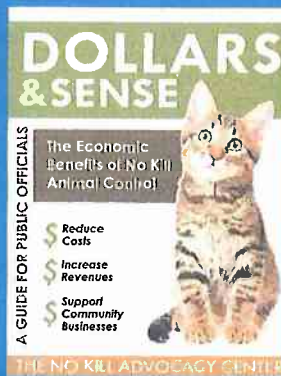
Model Legislation to Improve the Performance & Life-Saving of Animal Shelters

YOU CAN DO IT! ADOPT YOUR WAY OUT OF KILLING:
A No Kill Guide for Animal Shelters

COUNTERING THE OPPOSITION:
Responding to the Ten Predictable & Recurring Excuses of No Kill Opponents

WHAT'S IN A NAME:
Why HSUS, the ASPCA & PETA Lobby AGAINST Shelter Reform

And more...



A No Kill Nation Is Within Our Reach

Executive Summary

Stayin' Alive Long Beach (SALB) is an initiative whose aim is to increase the adoption rate for healthy and treatable animals at Long Beach's Animal Care Services (ACS). In February, 2013, SALB undertook a study of the programs and services of ACS, the City agency charged with the control and care of stray and abandoned animals in Long Beach. This report presents an analysis of over 300 pages of data received, under the auspices of the California Public Records Act, from ACS during the period of February through September, 2013 and covers ACS operations from 2010 to 2012. The major findings of this report, entitled "What's Happening to Long Beach's shelter animals?: A report on the effectiveness of Long Beach Animal Care Services and recommendations for change," are given below.

Long Beach Animal Care Services, by euthanizing more than 53% of cats and dogs in its shelter over the past three years, fails the public in its animal care role and routinely misleads the public in this regard.

53% Euthanasia Rate

ACS currently underperforms in its animal care capacity.

- In 2012, ACS euthanized more than 53% of companion animals, putting to death more than 5,100 cats, kittens, dogs and puppies. Kittens, with a euthanasia rate of 78%, had the lowest save rate of all of the animals taken in by ACS.
- ACS has euthanized nearly 41,000 animals (companion and other animals) over the past 6 years. Of these 41,000 animals, 34,000 were companion animals.
- In 2012, the number of dogs ACS euthanized *increased* by 2.6%.
- In 2012, ACS placed only 13 companion animals in foster homes.
- ACS achieves an extremely low shelter adoption rate, adopting out a mere 3.3% of the companion animals it took in in 2012 (324 animals out of nearly 10,000 impounded). There is an obvious lack of a comprehensive adoption program – and indeed a lack of *any* coherent and sustained adoption program for ACS animals.
- This failure is due in part to ACS's overreliance on the adjacent spcaLA to do adoptions, which takes in only 28% of the animals at risk of euthanasia at ACS.
- ACS euthanizes 74% of the animals that are not taken in by the neighboring spcaLA, revealing a severe deficit in ACS's performance on adoptions.
- This adoption deficit at ACS results in the deaths of *unnecessarily* large numbers of companion animals at ACS every year.

Reduction in Spay/Neuter Voucher Funding

ACS has steadily reduced its funding of spay/neuter in Long Beach, generally realized through a voucher program that subsidizes the cost of spay/neuter of the animals belonging to residents in the agency's jurisdiction.

Policy Report: What's Happening to Long Beach's Shelter Animals?: A report on the effectiveness of Long Beach Animal Care Services and recommendations for change available at www.stayinalivelongbeach.org

- From 2010 to 2012, the agency decreased its funding of the spay/neuter voucher program by 77% to only \$24,788.
- During approximately the same period, ACS nearly doubled the amount of revenue from animal licensing, taking in \$1 million from that program alone.
- This massive shift in priorities indicates that the City of Long Beach has repositioned ACS in the role of revenue generator rather than as a provider of a public service.

Questionable Reporting Practices – Inflated Adoption Statistics

Even more troubling is the fact that ACS engages in questionable reporting practices by inflating its adoption statistics when releasing numbers to the public. By including wildlife and animals transferred to known high-kill facilities, the agency engages in an ongoing practice of overstating the number of animals adopted and returned to owners. In 2012, ACS overstated its adoption/redemption numbers by nearly 300 percent, a practice that should be shocking to the taxpayers of Long Beach.

Lack of Programs Aimed at Decreasing Killing

ACS lacks a number of the critical programs that have been proven to increase lifesaving rates upwards of 90% in other communities, such as Austin, Texas. Austin's open-admission municipal shelter has achieved a save rate of more than 90% for two years in a row. The City of Austin has accomplished this by implementing proactive 21st century, evidence-based practices in animal sheltering **without increasing their budget.**

Currently, ACS implements very few of the programs that have been proven to save lives. A review of their programs reveals that ACS currently fails to but needs to implement:

- a coherent, comprehensive adoption program
- a foster home program
- a trap-neuter-release program for community cats
- a neonatal foster program for kittens and puppies
- increased cooperation with rescue organizations
- increased spay/neuter support for the residents of Long Beach and contracting cities
- reduced fees for redemption of animals at the shelter to increase returns to owner
- programs to reduce owner surrender of animals
- transparency in reporting numbers and accountability to the public, and
- **a large-scale volunteer program**, which is the engine with which such lifesaving programs are driven.

This can be done without increasing ACS's budget through 1) reallocation of resources from ineffective programs to lifesaving programs, 2) strategic planning and 3) leveraging the goodwill of Long Beach's animal-loving public by declaring Long Beach a No Kill City.

Long Beach is a city of animal-lovers, the vast majority of whom believe that ACS should be a protector and safe harbor for lost and homeless animals in Long Beach. This report reveals that ACS clearly falls far short of this goal and does so year after year. Much work must be done before Long Beach can be the "safest city for people and animals" that ACS claims it to be. It is time for ACS to work proactively and transparently to end the killing of adoptable and treatable animals in Long Beach. The goal of this report is to pave the way for this transformation to happen.



The Case of Washoe County, Nevada
County seat: Reno, NV

In 2007, Nevada Humane Society launched an ambitious no-kill initiative to make Washoe County, Nevada one of the safest communities in the United States for homeless animals. **One year after they began following No Kill principles, the number of dogs and cats killed in Washoe County animal shelters declined by 51% for dogs and 52% for cats (compared to 2006, before the County went No Kill).** The 2007 save rate for dogs was 92% and 78% for cats, despite a per capita intake rate that was over twice the national average and over three times that of many communities. In that first year, they found new homes for 7,452 homeless dogs and cats and 578 other animals. The adoption rate increased 53% for dogs and over 84% for cats (compared to 2006). The volunteer ranks increased from 30 to over 1,300 local citizens since expanding the volunteer program in March of 2007. **In 2012, Washoe County saved 92% of dogs and cats in their shelters.**

The following slides document the continued success Washoe County had from 2007 to 2012, the year for which the most recent statistics are available. These successes are the result of vigorously implementing the programs of the No Kill Equation.

<http://www.nevadahumanesociety.org/pdf/HowWeDidIt11-08.pdf>



***“Efficiency is
doing things right;
effectiveness is
doing the right
things.”***

- Peter Drucker

Washoe County, Nevada, Statistics

Decreased animals losing their lives in Washoe County shelters

2007: 52% decrease

2,700 fewer dogs & cats lost their lives in 2007 than 2006.

2008: 10% decrease

2009: 27% decrease

2010: 12% decrease

2011: no change

2012: 16% decrease



Nevada Humane Society Statistics

Pet Adoptions

2006: 4,990 (pre-no-kill initiative)

2007: 8,030 up 61%
3,040 more adoptions

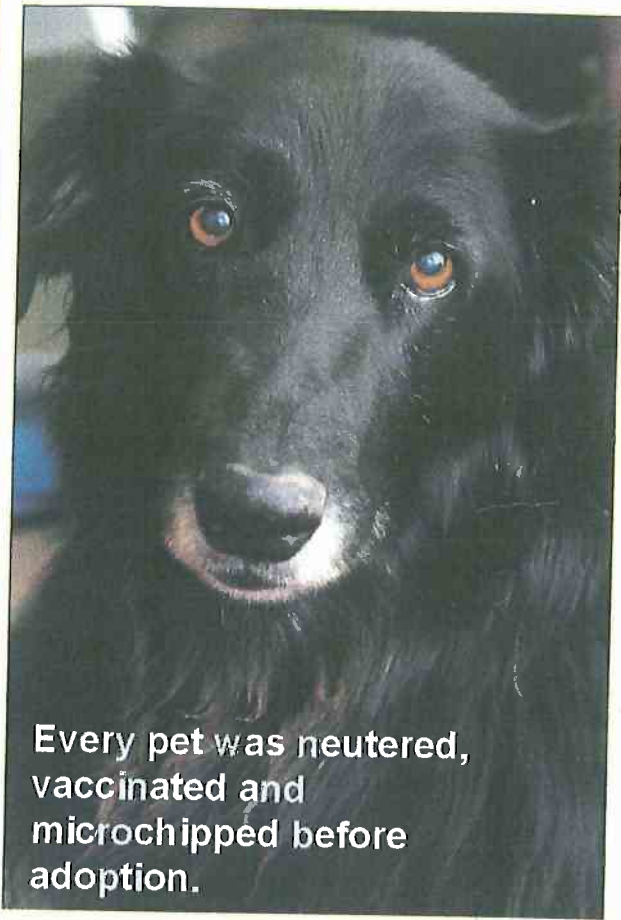
2008: 8,635 up 7%
605 more adoptions

2009: 9,184 up 6%
549 more adoptions

2010: 9,668 up 5%
484 more adoptions

2011: 9,340 down 3%
328 fewer adoptions (admissions down 3%)

2012: 8,816 down 5%
524 fewer adoptions (admissions down 8%)



Every pet was neutered,
vaccinated and
microchipped before
adoption.